



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN

GREENBERG QUINLAN ROSNER RESEARCH

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Support for Equality in Nebraska

To: Interested Parties

From: The Human Rights Campaign/Citizens for Equal Protection (CFEP)
Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research

A recent survey of 616 adults in Nebraska shows broad support for expanding legal protections for the LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) community in this deeply conservative state. On questions ranging from employment discrimination, to adoption, to anti-bullying legislation, to establishing domestic partnerships for same-sex couples, impressive majorities of Nebraska residents are committed to changing laws to increase equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual transgender people across the state. Indeed, the state is well ahead of Nebraska politicians on these issues.

But even more impressive is the growing social equality of the LGBT community. At one time, this community was defined by media-driven stereotypes. It is now defined by gay neighbors, gay co-workers, gay friends, and gay relatives. A 60 percent majority of the state know at least one gay or lesbian person. Not only do huge majorities of Nebraska residents believe they could be close friends with a gay man or lesbian, but a majority would not be bothered if one of their children or grandchildren turned out to be gay.

As is the case with the rest of the country, Nebraska has not fully embraced the equality of the LGBT community. There is still work to do. A majority oppose marriage equality in this state and reactions to gay and lesbian people in general are mixed. But the state, like the country, has changed.

This memorandum summarizes the results of a survey of 616 Nebraska adults taken between August 2 and 4, 2011 with an oversample of 200 adults in the city of Omaha. The total sample in the city of Omaha stands at 300 counting both the base sample and oversample. The survey was commissioned by the Human Rights Campaign, CFEP and executed by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. It carries on margin of error of +/- 4.00 at a 95 percent confidence level.

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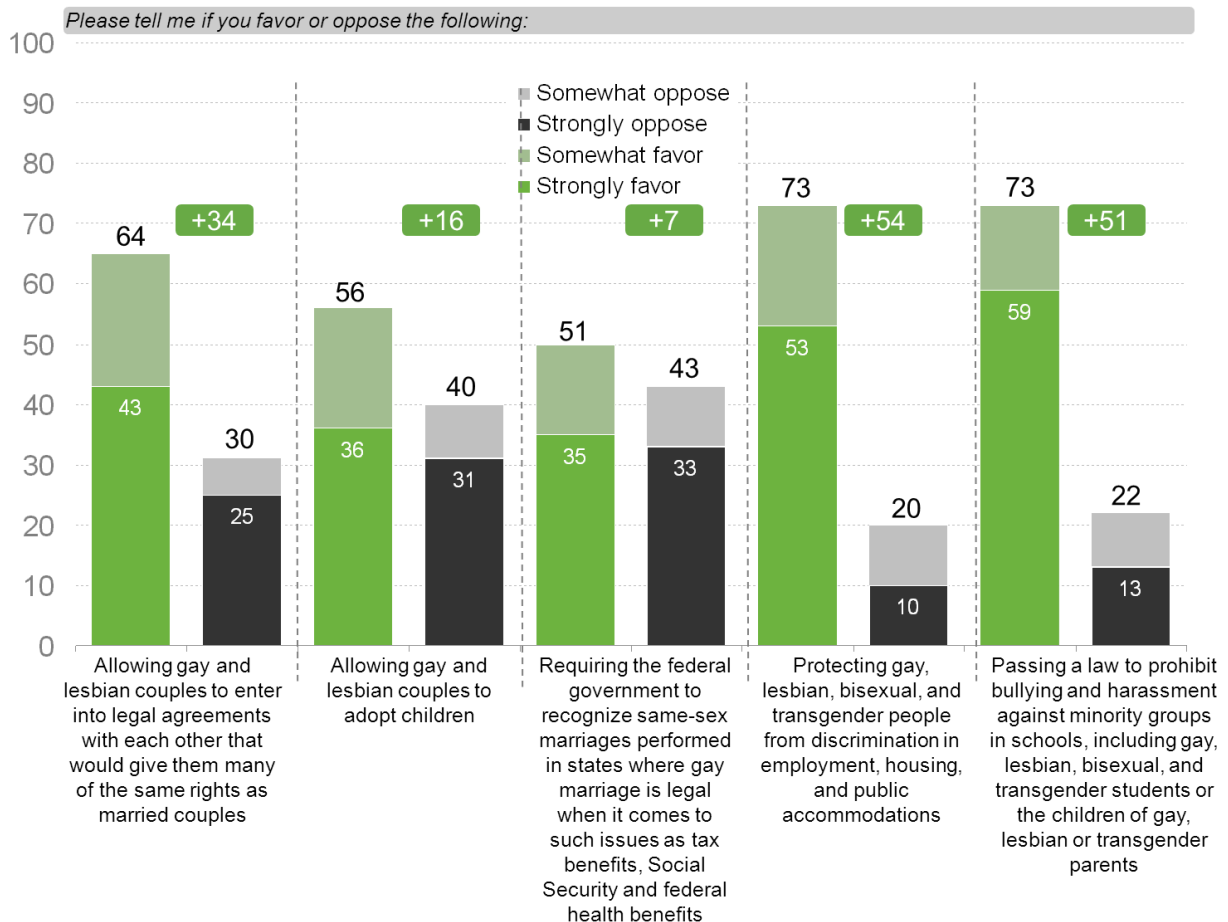
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Main Findings

Nebraska residents strongly support basic civil rights protections for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people.

- A 73 percent majority of Nebraska residents recognize discrimination is a problem in our country and 32 percent describe it as a major problem.
- In the state of Nebraska, as is the case in 29 other states, it is perfectly legal to fire someone for being gay. This reality does not sit well with Nebraska residents, as 73 support protecting gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people from discrimination in employment, housing and public accommodations.
- In the city of Omaha, support increases to 78 percent.
- Nebraskans strongly support laws prohibiting bullying, a majority support allowing gay or lesbian couples to adopt children and support domestic partnerships that confer many of the rights and protections of marriage to same-sex couples.

Figure 1: Support for Civil Rights Protections



Nebraska is in a different place when it comes to marriage equality.

- In HRC's national survey, 51 percent supported allowing gay and lesbian couples to marry legally, one of three surveys taken this year showing a pro-marriage majority. In Nebraska, however, residents oppose marriage by a 51 to 42 percent margin.
- However, younger residents support marriage equality 73 to 25 percent. Support reaches a 58 percent majority among women under 50 and 54 percent among people who know at least one gay or lesbian person.
- A 76 percent majority believe same-sex marriage will eventually be legal and 49 percent believe it will be legal within the next ten years.

Legal equality springs from the growing social equality in the state.

- A 60 percent majority of Nebraska residents know a gay or lesbian individual, 70 percent in Omaha.
- A 69 percent majority of Nebraska men say they could be "close friends" with a gay man and 76 percent of Nebraska women could be close friends with a lesbian.
- A third (33 percent) of Nebraska residents describe themselves as "more accepting" of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people over the last five to ten years, only 9 percent are less accepting. Among Republicans, 33 percent are more accepting, just 13 percent less accepting.
- Perhaps most strikingly, 56 percent say they would not be bothered if one of their children or grandchildren turned out to be gay, including 64 percent of Catholic voters, 67 percent among people who know someone gay or lesbian, 57 percent among women over 50 and even 42 percent among Republicans.

Conclusion

The support we see for expanding legal protections for the LGBT community reflects a state trying to be fair and humane to people they know: their friends, their neighbors, their coworkers. It is important to recognize that much work remains to be done in this state. A majority opposes marriage equality; it is still legal, even in Omaha, to fire someone for being gay. The support we see for gay and lesbian people does not always equate to similar levels of support for bisexual or transgender people. However, the state of Nebraska, like the country as a whole, has come a long way.